

CALIFORNIA

OCCUPATIONAL GUIDES

BUTCHERS AND MEAT CUTTERS

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INTEREST AREA
MECHANICAL - FOOD PREPARATION



WHAT DO BUTCHERS AND MEAT CUTTERS DO?

Skilled preparation of meat for wholesale or retail trade is the principal function of BUTCHERS AND MEAT CUTTERS. Over three hundred cuts of meat can be made from animal carcasses from slaughterhouses.

Butchers and Meat Cutters work in wholesale or retail meat firms where they perform the following tasks:

- Cut larger pieces of meat from the slaughterhouse into smaller cuts.
- Cut, trim, bone, tie, and grind meats, such as beef, pork, poultry, and fish into cooking-size pieces.
- Shape, lace, and tie roasts, using boning knife, skewer, and twine.
- Wrap and weigh meat for customers and may collect money for sales.

- Place meat on trays in display counter.
- Estimate amount and type of meat needed and order meat supply.
- Receive, inspect, and store meat upon delivery.

In wholesale meat firms, Butcher apprentices begin their training by doing odd jobs in the plant such as clean-up. Training includes learning to operate equipment such as forklifts or power-driven saws and grinders. In time, apprentices gradually learn to divide whole carcasses, halves, and quarters into cuts shipped to retail firms.

In retail establishments, Meat Cutter apprentices begin by preparing some of the cheaper cuts. They learn to bone meat and roll and tie roasts. They also learn merchandising, salesmanship, how to set up a counter display, and advise customers about meat preparation and cooking.

WHAT SKILLS ARE IMPORTANT?

Some of the important skills, knowledge, and abilities for Butchers and Meat Cutters include:

- Product Inspection – Inspecting and evaluating the quality of products.
- Mathematics – Using mathematics to solve problems.
- Problem Identification – Identifying the nature of problems.
- Active Listening – Listening to what other people are saying and asking questions as appropriate.
- Equipment Selection – Determining the kind of tools and equipment needed to do a job.
- Operation and Control – Controlling operations of equipment or systems.
- Manual Dexterity – The ability to quickly make coordinated movements of one hand, a hand together with its arm, or two hands to grasp, manipulate, or assemble objects.

- **Wrist-Finger Speed** – The ability to make fast, simple, repeated movements of the fingers, hands, and wrists.
- **Customer and Personal Service** – Knowledge of principles and processes for providing customer and personal services.

WHAT'S THE WORK ENVIRONMENT?

Meat Cutters working in retail meat markets move back and forth from counter to cooler. Butchers usually work in lower temperatures more often than Cutters. The occupation requires physical strength to lift and carry large cuts of meat and the ability to work with the hands and to stand for long periods. These workers need good eyesight and ability to move about with ease and speed. The work requires healthy workers who will not spread contagious diseases.

Workers should not mind working around animal carcasses. Although they work in clean and sanitary conditions, their clothing is often soiled with animal blood and the air may smell unpleasant.

Injuries to fingers and hands sometimes result from careless use of tools and equipment. The repetitive nature of the work may cause damage to the wrist (carpal tunnel syndrome). Occasionally, a worker may suffer a hernia or a back injury. Equipment guards, hand and stomach guards, and safety instruction during apprenticeship all help to prevent accidents.

Employers must enforce safety requirements of the State Division of Industrial Safety and provide first aid equipment and floor covering suitable for liquid drainage and long-term standing.

Union Membership

Butchers and Meat Cutters may belong to the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union.

WHAT'S THE CALIFORNIA JOB OUTLOOK?

The following information is from the occupational projections produced by the Employment Development Department's Labor Market Information Division:

Estimated number of workers in 1998:	18,300
Estimated number of workers in 2008:	16,500
Projected Growth 1998-2008:	-9.8%
Est. openings due to separations by 2008:	4,100

These figures do not include self-employment.

Trends

The number of jobs for highly skilled Butchers and Meat Cutters, who work mostly in retail outlets, is expected to decline. New automation and the consolidation of the meatpacking and poultry processing industries are enabling employers to hire lower wage slaughterers and meatpackers instead of higher paid Butchers in meatpacking plants.

Most red meat arrives at grocery stores partially cut up, but a greater percentage of meat is being delivered prepackaged, with additional fat removed, to wholesalers and retailers. This trend is resulting in less work and fewer jobs for retail Butchers.

Most job opportunities will come from replacing workers who retire, die, or leave the occupation for other reasons.

WHAT DOES THE JOB PAY?

California Earnings

Butchers and Meat Cutters 2001 Wages

Hourly wages range from	\$8.79	to	\$19.54
Average hourly wage	\$14.52		
Average annual wage	\$30,206		

Source: Occupational Employment Survey of Employers by EDD/LMID.

Hours

Butchers and Meat Cutters usually work a 40-hour week; those in retail firms may work on weekends.

Benefits

Almost all employers surveyed pay health benefits; many pay for dental, vision, and life insurance, sick leave, and retirement plans. Most employers also provide uniforms if they are required.

HOW DO I PREPARE FOR THE JOB?

Education and Training

Union-apprentice Butchers or Meat Cutters must first be hired by a company that has signed an agreement with the Joint Apprenticeship Committee. Approximately 4,000 hours of supervised on-the-job training is required during the two-year apprenticeship. Apprentices also take a minimum of 144 hours each year of related classroom training. Journey-level status is granted after the apprentice qualifies in both job performance and classroom work.

Butchers and Meat Cutters provide their own hand tools at the beginning of training. These include various knives, a cleaver, stitching needles, and a sharpening steel, that together can cost \$300 or more. Employers provide power equipment, linen, and uniforms if required, as well as protective gear.

Most employers prefer apprentices who have completed high school. Helpful high school courses include mathematics and any shop courses that develop skill in the use of hand and power tools.

Some firms give an arithmetic test to applicants. In general, apprentices must be at least 18 years old.

Butchers and Meat Cutters who begin work as trainees in independent shops can gain needed skills to shorten the apprenticeship period. Ex-military cooks and Butchers may have a shorter apprenticeship period. Employers look for a willingness and ability to learn and take responsibility and to deal with customers in a friendly, efficient way.

Licensing and Certification

Licensing and certification is not required for this occupation.

Continuing Education

Classes are not required after workers complete the classroom training program for apprentices.

HOW DO I FIND THE JOB?

Direct application to employers remains one of the most effective job search methods. The most common way to enter this occupation is through the formal apprenticeship program run by employers in cooperation with the local Joint Apprenticeship Committee. Private firms are listed in the yellow pages under Meat-Retail and Meat-Wholesale. California job openings can be found at various online job-listing systems including CalJOBSSM at www.caljobs.ca.gov or at America's Job Bank at www.ajb.dni.us.

For other occupational and wage information and a listing of the largest employers in any county, visit the Employment Development Department Labor Market Information Web page at www.calmis.ca.gov. Find further job search assistance from your nearest Job Service office www.edd.ca.gov/jsloc.htm or the closest One-Stop site listed on the California WorkNet site, www.sjtcc.ca.gov/sjtccweb/one-stop.

WHERE CAN THIS JOB LEAD?

Journey-level Meat Cutters may promote to head Meat Cutter, assistant manager, or manager of a shop. There are fewer opportunities in wholesale firms, although some journey-level Butchers go on to supervisory jobs or to work as an inspector. Butchers, like Meat Cutters, sometimes become owners of retail shops.

OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

For the closest district office contact:
California Division of Apprenticeship
Standards
455 Golden Gate Avenue, 8th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94102
(415) 703-4920
www.dir.ca.gov/DAS

United Food and Commercial Workers
International Union
Suffrage Building
1775 K Street N.W.
Washington, DC 20006
(202) 223-3111
www.ufcw.org

Employment Projections by Occupation
www.calmis.ca.gov/htmlfile/subject/occproj.htm

Employment and Wages by Occupation
[www.calmis.ca.gov/file/occup\\$/OES\\$.htm](http://www.calmis.ca.gov/file/occup$/OES$.htm)

RELATED OCCUPATIONAL GUIDES

Cashiers	No. 31
Cooks and Chefs	No. 93
Cooks, Short Order and Fast Food	No. 366

OCCUPATIONAL CODE REFERENCES

SOC (*Standard Occupational Classification*)
Butchers and Meat Cutters 51-3021

O*NET (*Occupational Information Network*)
Butchers and Meat Cutters 51-3021.00

OES (*Occupational Employment Statistics*)
Butchers and Meat Cutters 65023

DOT (*Dictionary of Occupational Titles*)
Butcher, Meat 316.681-010
Meat Cutter 316.684-018